

# Hope: An Advent/Christmas Journey

## *Small Group Lessons for Adults*

Date	Title	Candle	Scripture
Nov. 29 (Advent 1)	Heaven on Earth	Hope	Isaiah 9:6

### Welcome

- Icebreaker
  - What Winter activity do you most look forward to?

### Primary Scripture

*A child is born to us, a son is given to us,  
and authority will be on his shoulders.  
He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.  
Isaiah 9:6*

### Daily Scriptures

Isaiah 40:21-31	John 14:1-14	Revelation 21:10-14,21
Isaiah 6:1-8	Isaiah 53:5-10	Hebrews 11:1-3, 39-40

### Introduction

Gender reveal celebrations have become a major highlight during the preparation time for expectant mothers, fathers, their loved ones. Creativity and innovation have become evident in the planning and execution of this monumental moment. Excitement builds as we await the good news.

### Discussion

A major prophecy by Isaiah revealed that something exciting was on the horizon. The people of Israel were in exile and needed a word of hope. Isaiah would make a prophetic announcement that would alter their lives and provide something for them to look forward to. However, following this announcement there would be a prolonged period of waiting.

### Question:

1. How can we maintain hope during a prolonged season where a promise has been made, but has yet to be fulfilled?
2. How does the potential to emerge from dismal circumstances affect the mindset of those who have been experiencing difficulty?

Hope came to the world in the form of a newborn child named Jesus. He is the Savior of the world and the incarnation of God. He is the fulfillment of prophecy and God's promise. This Savior brought hope to the world that was worth waiting for. Jesus makes it possible for us to experience Heaven on earth as we welcome Him into our lives as Savior and King. Prophecy foretold,

*"He will be named Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."  
(Isaiah 9:6)*

This was great news to the people of Israel, and remains great news to us today.

**Questions:**

3. What did the prophecy of a mighty ruler mean to the people of Israel who were in need of a Messiah?
4. What does the fulfillment of this prophecy mean for us today?

Jesus was the promised Messiah who would lead Israel from oppression to overcoming. Israel had been looking hoping for a king whose very presence would change their immediate circumstances. During their season of waiting, they continued to trust,

*“those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.”  
(Isaiah 40:31)*

Waiting is not easy. Prolonged waiting has the potential to deplete one’s strength and cause them to grow weary. This is especially true when the waiting period extends from days to weeks, weeks to months, months to years, and years to decades and beyond. Very few people are good at waiting. Oftentimes when we want something, we want it right away. However, holding on to hope that one day the wait will be over and trusting that a promise or blessing will one day be received gives us the strength to endure until the promise has been fulfilled.

**Questions:**

5. Why is waiting for a promise to be fulfilled difficult for many?
6. What should we do during a season of waiting and anticipation?
7. How should we respond when we begin to grow tired of waiting for our promise to be fulfilled?

Isaiah’s prophetic words were shared with a people who had been experiencing exile. Their hopes and dreams had been eclipsed by their current situation. Isaiah’s prophecy of hope was spoken in the midst of a hopeless situation. Israel’s oppression would last hundreds of years until God’s promise intersected with new hope that came with the birth of Jesus. God was physically present with humanity. Jesus would not only be good news for humanity, but would also bring Heaven on Earth. Heaven is rich in joy and overflowing with peace. Jesus would usher in new peace and joy on Earth.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary. He was born into the royal lineage of king David. Israel had been hoping and dreaming of a ruler who would lead them into the future with justice and virtue. However, no one expected for that king to be born in a manger with animals. Jesus would have a humble and lowly birth but would become a tremendous blessing to the world. He would experience tests and trials but would remain sinless and become the perfect sacrifice to atone for all of the sins of humanity. Being both human and divine, Jesus would become the perfect Savior who was able to not only identify with the pain and suffering of sinful humanity but also reconcile it with a sinless God.

**Questions:**

8. What can we expect when God’s promise intersects with a situation that appears to be hopeless?
9. Why is it beneficial to have an advocate who is familiar with the tests and trials that we face?

Jesus brought hope and healing for our world. The one who was born for us also died for our sins and created an everlasting connection between Heaven and Earth. Because of Jesus we are able to feel Heaven all around us. We experience Heaven on Earth when we feel a tug that strengthens, comforts, and encourages us to hold on during difficult times. Our prayers create hope that is heard by God. Hope gives us the assurance of a better outcome in spite of the process we may have to endure.

As we open our eyes and heart during this Advent season, we can see Heaven on Earth. We can be fully aware of the presence of Jesus and grace in our lives.

**Question:**

10. How have you experienced Heaven on Earth?

**Prayer Journal Entry**

- Each day write 1 way that you have experienced Heaven on Earth. How did it make you feel? Are you able to share this experience with others?

**Soul-Check/Transformation Question** (Everyone Answers)

- How easy is it for you to acknowledge God's presence during moments of difficulty as you are waiting for positive change to come?

**Prayer Requests**

**Prayer/Dismissal**

Date	Title	Candle	Scripture
Dec. 6 (Advent 2)	Forgiveness & Grace	Faith	Micah 5:2; Isaiah 61:1-2

### Welcome

- Icebreaker
  - What is your favorite food to enjoy during the holidays?

### Primary Scriptures

*As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
though you are the least significant of Judah's forces,  
one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out from you.  
His origin is from remote times, from ancient days.  
(Micah 5:2)*

*The Lord God's spirit is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim release for captives, and liberation for prisoners,  
<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and a day of vindication for our God,  
to comfort all who mourn  
(Isaiah 61:1-2)*

### Daily Scriptures

Matthew 2:1-12	Luke 2:4	Isaiah 53:1-5
John 4:21-26	Luke 4:14-21	Luke 23:32-34a

### Introduction

When God's people were exiled, utterly alone and facing economic uncertainty, Isaiah spoke words of hope. The Prophet Micah also foretold of a ruler in Israel whose origin is from remote times. The words of these prophets brought hope to a community that looked forward to better days. In today's times, their words still offer hope to a world filled with chaos. During Advent, as we wait for Jesus' birth, we celebrate the liberation, freedom and hope that He brings.

### Discussion

Bethlehem was historically seen as the least significant of Judah's forces. However, the prophet Micah foretold,

*...though you are the least significant of Judah's forces,  
One who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf  
will come out from you.  
(Micah 5:2)*

Bethlehem may not have been one of the most popular locations at the time that Jesus was born. Yet, it had a proud and rich history. Bethlehem was the birthplace of King David. It would soon be home to a new King. It was in Bethlehem that Jesus was born outside in a manger because there was no room in the inn. His outdoor birth connects Jesus to the marginalized community and outsiders such as the powerless, the oppressed, the poor, and the homeless.

### Questions:

1. While society often views outsiders as insignificant, God always views them as precious. Why is this?
2. How does knowing that Jesus was an outsider influence the way that we should look at members of marginalized communities?
3. How is it possible for someone with humble beginnings to advance to a life of influence?

Most may have expected for a Warrior King and Savior to be born into an affluent family. However, from its beginning to its ending, the life of Jesus was counter cultural. The one who was born outside would die between two thieves. He was never embraced as an insider. He was among the underdogs of society. Many underdogs desire to be wanted, accepted, and approved by power holders in society. However, in the battle for equality and justice, they are rarely on the winning end. They often sit and desire to be fully welcomed and accepted. Those who have experienced oppression may find hope in Jesus, because he too was oppressed and marginalized by those who had power.

#### Questions:

4. How would it feel to never be never be embraced as an insider?
5. What can you do during this advent season to embrace those who have frequently been rejected?
6. How can you even up the battlefield for underdogs who are on your job, at your church, and in your community?

Jesus continues to be a source of strength for those who have been denied justice and equality. Jesus is also hope for all people as we are in need of forgiveness and grace. It's encouraging to remember that Jesus knows and cares. He understands what we are going through and is present with us during difficult and painful moments. His presence gives us hope. As followers of Christ, our hope is eternal and unwavering. As we embrace hope, we must also share it with others.

The hope that Jesus offers includes forgiveness and grace. Forgiveness and grace is seen in our theme Scripture that communicates the cry, pain, and protest of an outsider:

*The Lord God's spirit is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim release for captives, and liberation for prisoners,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and a day of vindication for our God,  
to comfort all who mourn.  
(Isaiah 61:1-2)*

This language reflects not only forgiveness and grace, but also the joy of Advent. Those have known affliction may be healed. Those who have been brokenhearted may be made whole. Those who have been bound may be made free.

#### Questions:

7. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus knows and cares about painful moments we have experienced and difficult moments that we have gone through?
8. As followers of Christ, why should our hope be eternal and unwavering?
9. How do we communicate God's grace to someone who has always been an outsider?

As we acknowledge our sin, we are able to receive God's forgiveness and experience God's grace. It is also important for us to learn to forgive ourselves and others. Jesus was anointed to release us from hurt and pain. This freedom must include forgiveness of ourselves and others and releasing things that were painful to us. We should also thank God for the daily grace that God gives. God's grace lasts for a lifetime and we experience it each day.

#### Questions:

10. As the Holy Spirit reveals to you someone whom you need to forgive, what should you do next?

#### Prayer Journal Entry

- Each day write 1 way that you can extend hospitality and grace to someone who is considered an outsider. Practice these approaches going forward.

**Soul-Check/Transformation Question** (Everyone Answers)

- How have you experienced God's grace today and in what way did you thank God for that grace?

**Prayer Requests**

**Prayer/Dismissal**

<b>Date</b> Dec 13 (Advent 3)	<b>Title</b> New Life in Christ	<b>Candle</b> Joy	<b>Scripture</b> Luke 2:8-11
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### Welcome

- Icebreaker
  - What is the best news you've ever heard or shared with someone?

### Primary Scripture

<sup>8</sup> Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night.  
<sup>9</sup> The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> The angel said,  
 "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people."  
 (Luke 2:8-11)

### Daily Scriptures

Luke 2:10-11	Luke 1:5-25	Luke 1:26-38
Luke 1:39-45	Luke 1:46-56	2 Corinthians 5:1-10

### Introduction

Amazon packages are all over the neighborhood. It feels like everyone's receiving gifts right now, yet none of them contain the ultimate gift. We are getting ready for the gift of Jesus; the gift that brings Good News, eternal life and ultimate joy.

### Discussion

Shepherds were considered unwelcomed in ancient Israel. They lived in the fields, surrounded by sheep, so they were unpleasant to be around. They were also considered to be thieves because of their transient lifestyle. But it was to this group of people that the angels make the first proclamation of Jesus' birth. From the world's perspective, shepherds had no reason to be joyful.

### Questions:

1. How would this outcast group of people receive the Good News of Great Joy?
2. What does the announcement of Jesus' birth to this group signal about the Savior who is to be born?

Fear. Not. Throughout Scripture, when an angel appears, their first words are usually, 'Fear not!' While fear is a God-given emotion that keeps us alive in dangerous situations, fear is often paralyzing. I would say that the shepherds were paralyzed in the moment that the angels appeared with Good News. Their fears are certainly understandable. While the angels had Good News, the shepherds had no way of conceiving this miracle that they beheld. We all have doubts about responding to Good News, especially when it places us in a fearful situation. But this is where we must be willing to step out boldly and trust that when God speaks, God provides.

*"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid."  
 (Luke 2:10)*

### Questions:

3. 2020 has certainly given each of us moments of fear. How has your trust in God grown when you've taken a step in faith?
4. Fears are contextual. What causes one person to be afraid may not bring fear to another person. How does seeing a faithful response in another person strengthen you to overcome a fear in your life?

Angel visitations are often the catalyst for action. After the angels departed from the shepherds, they went to see the newborn Savior. Upon seeing Jesus, the shepherds 'spread the word.' After Mary's visitation with the angel who announced her role in bringing salvation to the world, Mary immediately traveled to her cousin Elizabeth's house. Mary and Elizabeth both played significant roles in bringing God's news of salvation. They chose to act upon the news they received.

*At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.  
(Luke 1:39-40)*

**Questions:**

5. When you receive Good News, what is your initial response? Do you spring into action? Do you seek to get the facts and discern the steps? (There is not a right or wrong answer.)
6. When others confirm the Good News that we are acting upon, what does their response do to you?

Fear often blinds us to the blessings that are occurring in front of us. This could have certainly been true in the uncharted territory of 2020. Fear has a way of making us question each step, even after we've taken them. For Zechariah, his questions may have caused him to miss the blessing right in front of him. And at times, it is easy for us to miss the blessing in front of us because of fear and questions.

*"Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard.  
Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.  
He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth."  
(Luke 1:13-14)*

**Questions:**

7. How do our fears keep us from experiencing the blessings of the moment? Can you name a blessing that you nearly missed because you were looking at something else?
8. The birth of Zechariah and Elizabeth's son, John, would signal the Good News of salvation for the world. We often fail to see our small miracle as a part of God's larger plan. How can we see our act of faith as a part of the 'big picture?'

The birth of Jesus brings Good News for all people. The shepherds were the least likely to be the first to hear the Good News, but the fact they did reminds all of us that Jesus came for everyone. The joy that Jesus brought to the shepherds is the same joy that we can experience today. Our lives are transformed by the new life that comes by faith in Jesus Christ. Like the shepherds, we are able to announce the joyous Good News to those we meet each day.

*Good news that will cause great joy for all the people.  
(Luke 2:10)*

**Questions:**

9. How does the Good News of Jesus' birth bring joy to those who are often considered outcasts in our world?
10. How will you take a step of faith to share the Good News with those who need joy?

**Prayer Journal Entry**

- Each day write one experience of joy. Was it a surprise? Who shared the joy with you? How does this experience of joy cause you to share the Good News of Jesus with others?

**Soul-Check/Transformation Question** (Everyone Answers)

- During the last several months, finding a reason to rejoice has often been difficult. How did the moments of joy you did experience provide hope for better days ahead?

**Prayer Requests**

**Prayer/Dismissal**

<b>Date</b> Dec. 20 (Advent 4)	<b>Title</b> Emmanuel	<b>Candle</b> Peace	<b>Scripture</b> Matthew 1:23
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### Welcome

- Icebreaker
  - What is the most memorable gift that you have ever received during the Christmas season?

### Primary Scripture

*Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
and they will call him Emmanuel.  
(Matthew 1:23)*

### Daily Scriptures

Isaiah 7:1-9

Isaiah 8:7-10

Matthew 1:18-24

### Introduction

Hurricanes, Afghanistan, Portland and COVID-19 – even in a world of such chaos, uncertainty and division we have a God who is with us. Matthew doesn't tell us of a God who is coming, but of a Lord who IS with us here and now.

### Discussion

Matthew carefully crafts his gospel with an emphasis on the presence of Jesus in our lives. In Matthew 1:27 Jesus is named as Emmanuel, "God with us." And after giving the Great Commission, Jesus' very last words again remind us of his presence,

*"Look, I myself will be with you every day  
until the end of this present age"  
(Matthew 28:20b)*

### Questions:

1. How does this emphasis on the presence of Jesus bring you comfort?
2. Jesus is clear that we have his presence, but sometimes it is difficult to 'feel' it. What steps could you take to move closer to Jesus this week?

Jesus was born into a world of chaos and upheaval. It had only been 30 years since the final rebellion at Masada and within a few short years of Jesus' birth the zealots would form their movement that would eventually lead to the destruction of the temple. These political movements caused economic upheaval and led to mass poverty among Jews who were already persecuted by their Roman captives. As we study in 2020 under a pandemic and calls for social reformation, the times of Jesus seem all too familiar.

3. What does it say to you that God chose such a tense and chaotic time to become physically present in Jesus?
4. How can this knowledge and Matthew 1 influence how you view 2020 and our entrance into 2021?

Jesus' birth brings catastrophe to the children of Bethlehem. Matthew's gospel tells us that Jesus becomes a refugee in Egypt and in order to keep his power, Herod slaughters the children of Bethlehem.

*"Rachel weeps for her children."  
(Matthew 2:28)*

2020 has become a year of lament as so many have experienced loss.

5. What does this Scripture say to you about worldly power and God's presence?

6. How does this birth story of Jesus bring you comfort in the midst of your loss in 2020?
7. What songs, poems or writings encourage you during your times of lament? Scriptures?

In the Emmanuel, we have the presence of God at the beginning and the end of the story and every moment in between. In the beginning, the shepherds went off telling everyone what they had seen and heard. And in his final commission, Jesus sends us out to tell the Good News. In the gospels, when people encounter Jesus their lives are changed and they tell others. Even as we are given The Presence, Jesus calls us to be that presence in the world.

8. How will you work to be with The Presence during the final weeks of 2020?
9. Where are the 'red zip codes' in your community? If you do not have this answer, where can you turn to identify the hurting areas?
10. As we get ready for the birth of Emmanuel, we are to BE God's presence for others. Where will you be God's presence fighting oppression, injustice and poverty?

#### **Prayer Journal Entry**

- Each day write down 1 person/area that you saw that needs The Presence, Jesus.

#### **Soul-Check/Transformation Question** (Everyone Answers)

- Even as we suffer so much in 2020 and look to 2021, how will you bring Jesus' presence into a hurting world.

#### **Prayer Requests**

#### **Prayer/Dismissal**

Date	Title	Candle	Scripture
Dec. 24	Claim the Christ	Christ	Luke 2:14

### Welcome

- Icebreaker
  - What is your favorite Advent song or Christmas carol?

### Primary Scripture

*In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. <sup>2</sup> This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. <sup>3</sup> Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. <sup>4</sup> Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. <sup>5</sup> He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. <sup>7</sup> She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.*

*<sup>8</sup> Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. <sup>9</sup> The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. <sup>11</sup> Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."*

*<sup>15</sup> When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." <sup>16</sup> They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. <sup>18</sup> Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.  
(Luke 2:1-20)*

### Daily Scriptures

Matthew 2:13-18

Matthew 2:19-23

### Introduction

"For unto us a child is born." God does not give us a far off promise with a very distant future. Jesus, the child, comes to live amongst us and change our lives now! This is the time to claim our many gifts in Jesus and bring that Good News into the world.

### Discussion

The light of Christ is our symbol. The birth of Christ fulfills God's promise of the old passing away, in its wake all being made new. Everything is made new in Christ. Thus, experiencing Advent means remaining open, again and again. Experiencing Advent means expecting the joy of the Lord to be available every which way you turn. In turn, you expect God to manifest anywhere and everywhere you are and go. This new reality has you expecting God to fulfill all the prophecies and plans for your life as well as those for other's lives.

### Questions:

1. What is your new reality in light of what you have discovered so far?
2. What prophecies are you expecting God to meet in your life? In the lives of others?

Waiting on these things to be fulfilled at a specific time on a certain date requires faith. That faith is energized through your strength. This requires guidance by the Light of Christ, which you get by the presence of Christ being your Heaven on Earth.

You are part of a special lineage. You, yes, you. First, you have your ancestor's faith. You inherited their victories and the capacity to overcome. At the same time, you are the answer to your ancestor's prayers.

**Questions:**

3. What are you passing on to those who follow you?
4. Who in your family had to overcome great trials to achieve their life's purpose? In what ways have you claimed that as your inheritance?

As you touch Christ as base, Heaven becomes the here and now: right here, right now. Your life matters and is always worth living as you see the love of Jesus in the world. Grace and love dispensed through Jesus is the new measure, our fresh metric. Remember always, this Jesus is the ultimate outsider, from birth through his death.

**Questions:**

5. How do I measure others? By what standards?
6. What metric should we be using as we engage with others?

An essential source of strength is hope. Your hope is important. It is joined with the hopes of those with whom you are in Christian community. Also important are forgiveness and grace as forms of hope. Expect God to show up daily by expecting each of these things: new joy, new faith, new love, new hope, new peace.

**Questions:**

7. How do I see hope in those around me?

Use what you have heard and experienced thus far to reimagine your perception of light and darkness. Here darkness is the absence of the baby Christ, with light being life reflected by contact with the Christ child within you. Clarity comes with Christ's light. Claim the Christ.

**Questions:**

8. In what ways have I been making do, rather than connecting with Heaven on Earth through the promise realized in the Christ child?
9. How do I get myself to invest in myself through this work? How have I been dealing with less when I can get more/be more/do more in Christ?
10. How do you take this, and form it into personal processes that work for you? What does your personal technology for doing this look like? How are you translating this into action?

**Prayer Journal Entry**

- Each day, write down 1 way that you will claim new hope that is available through Christ.

**Soul-Check/Transformation Question** (Everyone Answers)

- How will you better direct your heart and mind to Christ when moments of fear arise?

**Prayer Requests**

**Prayer/Dismissal**

Date	Title	Candle	Scripture
Dec. 27	2021		Luke 12:22-34

### Welcome

- Icebreaker
  - What is one thing that you hope to do differently this year?

### Primary Scripture

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Therefore, I say to you, don’t worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. <sup>23</sup> There is more to life than food and more to the body than clothing. <sup>24</sup> Consider the ravens: they neither plant nor harvest, they have no silo or barn, yet God feeds them. You are worth so much more than birds!

<sup>25</sup> Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life  
<sup>26</sup> If you can’t do such a small thing, why worry about the rest? <sup>27</sup> Notice how the lilies grow.  
They don’t wear themselves out with work, and they don’t spin cloth.  
But I say to you that even Solomon in all his splendor wasn’t dressed like one of these.

<sup>28</sup> If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully,  
even though it’s alive today and tomorrow it’s thrown into the furnace,  
how much more will God do for you, you people of weak faith!  
<sup>29</sup> Don’t chase after what you will eat and what you will drink. Stop worrying.  
<sup>30</sup> All the nations of the world long for these things. Your Father knows that you need them.  
<sup>31</sup> Instead, desire his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well.

<sup>32</sup> “Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights in giving you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup> Sell your possessions and give to those in need. Make for yourselves wallets that don’t wear out—a treasure in heaven that never runs out. No thief comes near there, and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup> Where your treasure is, there your heart will be too.  
(Luke 12:22-34)

### Daily Scriptures

Jeremiah 29:11-14	Romans 5:1-5	Romans 5:6-11
Romans 15:1-6	Romans 15:7-13	Isaiah 43:19

### Introduction

This moment is just what we have been waiting for; finally 2020 is over and we can begin to live in 2021! When we follow Jesus, fear and worry are replaced with faith and action. Let’s make 2021 different as Christians living the faith in a brand new way!

### Discussion

2021 is finally here! Each month of 2020 seemed to bring a new challenge that many have been waiting for the new year. Yet as followers of Jesus, we recognize that our life is short and precious.

“The days of a human life are like grass...”  
(Psalm 103:15)

Celebration is a year long activity, not just for the best moments of life.

### Questions:

“Hope: An Advent Journey” by Olu Brown

1. What can you celebrate about 2020?
2. How can you take Christmas, all the hope, peace and joy, into January of 2021?

“Don’t Worry, Be Happy”, title to the iconic song from Bobby McFerrin captures our desire on how we want to live. When Jesus speaks on worry, it isn’t in the context of happiness, but rather on knowing that God cares deeply for us. Worry tears us down and eats away at our self-worth and value.

3. Think about your worries. Name them in order to take away their power. Which, if any, of those worries can you control? Are there action steps you could take to ease the worry?
4. Take the worries that are out of your control and rewrite them in a prayer to the Lord.
5. Instead of focusing on the worry, what opportunities do you see in the new year?

Fear is dangerous because it can prevent us from surrendering to God’s preferred plans for our lives. Fear tells us lies and derails us from following God’s path. The opposite of fear is faith and hope. In the celebration of Advent and Christmas we learned of a Savior who is very present and provides us the hope to live in this in between time.

6. How does having hope in Jesus ease your fears?
7. What do you need to lean on trust and hope verses your fears?

A faithful response in 2021 is to turn to positivity. Positivity is a choice and when put into action can be built like any good habit. It takes effort, faith and choosing each day to remain positive.

8. What is one thing you could do each day to build the habit of positivity in your life?
9. What scripture or phrase could become your breath prayer when you find yourself leaning in to negativity?
10. What message of Jesus in the last 5 weeks will you carry throughout an unknown 2021?

#### **Prayer Journal Entry**

- Write down one fear or worry each day. Then pray: Jesus is not on the way, Jesus is here. Jesus never left me; Jesus is always with me.

#### **Soul-Check/Transformation Question (Everyone Answers)**

- What do you need to let go of to better focus on positivity that will come during 2021?

#### **Prayer Requests**

#### **Prayer/Dismissal**